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SOME INTERESTING QUESTIONS ANSWERED

IS A PLACE IN THE “LITTLE FLOCK” TOO GREAT AN ASPIRATION?

Question.—Who will be found worthy to be of the “little flock”? Is not this aspiring too high? Should we not, rather, hope to be of the great company, who will go through the fire of tribulation?

Answer.—Were it not that God has graciously, in the New Covenant, made provision for the covering of our unintentional blemishes and weaknesses, under the garment of Christ’s righteousness, none of us could hope to be worthy of such a high calling as has been extended to us—a call to the divine nature and to joint-heirship with our Lord and Redeemer. As the Apostle expresses it, “Our sufficiency is of Christ.”

This does not mean, however, that we have nothing to do with making our calling and election sure. On the contrary, God having made provision for our justification from the sins that are past, thus fitted us to receive this high calling and prepared us to respond to it in a manner acceptable to himself. But our response must be hearty, as unto the Lord—a full consecration of ourselves even unto death in his service. We cannot claim that our Lord’s death secures for us the prize of the high calling. His death secures for us the right to run the race; but the running of the race is our own affair, and only those who run that race will win that prize. Our Lord’s sacrifice, in addition to opening for us the race-course, helps us over the infirmities of the flesh, because under the terms of the New Covenant God accepts our will, our heart-intentions, in respect to this race, and not the achievements of our flesh merely. God’s grace in Christ making up for our natural imperfections, we are accredited as running the race with all the zeal and fervor of our minds, our wills, our endeavors. God thus judges us according to the spirit of our minds, and not according to the attempts of the flesh.

It is thus, with Christ’s righteousness supplementing our fully consecrated wills and best efforts, that the Lord reckons us “worthy” of joint-heirship with his son, our Lord. And if God counts such “worthy” why should not we count such worthy, including ourselves, if with our hearts we are serving the Lord to the best of our several abilities?

No; it will be easier to get into the little flock than into the great company, so far as experiences are concerned. The difference between the two classes will

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consist not so much in the experiences as in the willingness to endure those experiences. As justified and consecrated children who endure whatever divine providence may permit, joyfully, and who go about the Father's business, doing with their might what their hands find to do, counting it a joy to suffer persecution in his service, these will constitute the "little flock," the "overcomers," the "worthy." Those who hold back from such suffering, and who endure persecution unwillingly, and merely rather than deny the Lord, are the ones whom we may expect to find will pass through the great time of trouble, and be of the great company, who will wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb.

WERE ALL THE MARTYRS OF THE SAINT CLASS?

Question.—Will not first of all the martyrs of the past be of the little flock, and are not they more than 144,000?

Answer.—We have no reason to question that there were faithful saints amongst the martyrs of the past. We may therefore expect such to be classed by our Lord as amongst the overcomers, the 144,000 mentioned in Revelation, the little flock, the elect Church. But we are of the opinion that there were fewer of the saints in olden times amongst the "martyrs" than the majority of people are inclined to think. Our reasons for this opinion are: The vast majority of those martyrdoms, so far as we are able to read between the lines of history, were in large part at least the results of political and social animosity—comparatively few of them for what might strictly be termed saintship—full consecration and faithfulness to the Lord. So far as the records show, many were executed very unwillingly; few willingly, joyfully, laid down their lives as living sacrifices to the Lord and his cause. Some, from the records,

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would appear to have gone to martyrdom spurred on by more or less of bravado, others by family or personal pride. Nor need it surprise us if we should ultimately find that a considerable number who were martyrs in the "dark ages" will be of the great company class who laid down their lives unwillingly, unjoyfully—impelled by their unwillingness to deny the Lord.

WHO ARE THEY WHO ARE "DEFILED" BY BABYLON?

Question.—You have already suggested that the expression, "These are they which were not defiled by women" (Rev. 14:4) symbolically refers to earthly church organizations, represented as women—Babylon, mother and daughters. Now, I want to enquire, Have not all or nearly all of us who now enjoy the light of Present Truth been at one time or another in Babylon, connected with some of these church systems or "women"? If so, have we not all been thus defiled? If not, what is

signified by the defilement?

Answer.—To our understanding, the point where defilement begins is after the light of truth has reached the Lord’s people, and opened the eyes of their understanding to see the difference between the Church whose names are written in heaven and the human organizations whose memberships are written on earth. After we have come to see something at least of the lengths and breadths and heights and depths of the divine character and plan, and to appreciate something at least of how the Lord and his plan have been misrepresented by these women (systems) and his character traduced, and after we have heard thus the voice of conscience and of the Lord’s Word, saying to us, “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins and that ye receive not of her plagues;”—then it is that our defilement of conscience begins, if we refuse to obey the light that God has granted us, and the voice of his Truth. Whoever, for social or financial or other mercenary reasons, holds to that which he sees is built upon a wrong principle, and upholding wrong theories, in defamation of the divine character, is defiling his conscience, will be unworthy to be counted an overcomer, and will fail to have a part in the first resurrection.

That this is so—that God does not reckon us defiled by our contact with Babylon up to the point of our enlightenment and our intelligent acquiescence in Babylon’s wrong condition and course—is evidenced by the Scripture which says, “Babylon is fallen, is fallen [rejected]. Come out of her, my people [this shows that the Lord’s people have mainly been in Babylon], that ye be not partakers of her sins [they are not reckoned to this point as being ‘defiled’], and that ye receive not of her plagues [all who thus defile themselves with Babylon after seeing her true character prove themselves unworthy of being classed amongst the overcomers, and at very most could only hope to be of those who would come up through great tribulation, and wash their robes (of defilements) and make them white in the blood of the Lamb].”

PRAYERS FOR EARTHLY RULERS

Question.—How should we understand the Apostle’s expression (1 Tim. 2:1-4), respecting the propriety of making prayer and supplication on behalf of “kings and all in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty”?

Answer.—We are to feel a keen interest in the whole world, its great and its poor. We are interested in them because they are our brethren and neighbors according to the flesh and because God loved them, had mercy upon them, and redeemed them with his blood, and has made a gracious provision for their reclamation by and by. In proportion as we are in accord with our Lord we must be in accord with all these features of his gracious plan, and this means a love for mankind and a desire to “do good unto all men as we have opportunity, especially to the

household of faith.”—Gal. 6:10.

Having such a kind feeling for the world it is appropriate that we should have their interests in mind when we pray, “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as in heaven;” indeed, any and everything which bears upon the interests of humanity must of necessity come close to the hearts of those who have the holy spirit of love. It is appropriate, therefore, that on proper occasions prayer and supplication be made on behalf of rulers, indicating our good wishes for their welfare and leading in ways of righteousness—even though we see them hastening in a wrong course toward evil conditions, sure to react to their injury.

The Apostle implies that these prayers for rulers should be to the intent that we may live a peaceable and quiet life—that God’s people may have the peace of God at all times ruling in their hearts, and never fearing the anarchistic or hateful spirit of the world, and of the blind leaders of the blind. So that if we cannot speak well of them nor cooperate with them for conscience’ sake we can at least bear them no grudge, but can pray for them, and make sure that we speak evil of no man.

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Our Lord’s prayer, recorded in John 17, “I pray not for the world,” should not be understood in contradiction of the Apostle’s declarations in this text, but rather be interpreted to mean, I am not now praying for the world, “but for those whom thou hast given me.”

Neither are we to understand the Apostle to mean that we are to pray for something contrary to what the Lord has instructed us; we are not to pray for and to expect the conversion of kings and rulers and nations, so that the time of trouble will not be necessary and will not come. On the contrary, we are to understand that the trouble will come, because the world is not in the proper attitude of heart for the change of dispensation which is now due to take place. It must pass through the baptism of “blood,” “fire,” “wrath,” in order to be ready for the new order of things, and these, therefore, will be so many blessings for the time disguised. Our prayers are to be in full accord with what is written, but this will not hinder us from good wishes for all, and from a sympathetic realization that many are perverse because they are blinded by the god of this world.

PSALM 51:12-16

Question.—Please throw some light on Psa. 51:12-16. We do not see sinners converted, as therein stated. Why?

Answer.—You evidently recognize the Psalms as prophetic, and this is right. The words of the

Prophet relate to the body of Christ in the Gospel age, rather than to himself in the Jewish age. Our desires are to be that we may be filled with the Lord's spirit, transformed by the renewing of our minds, and we recognize as a fact that only those who have experienced such a transformation can properly represent the Lord as rebukers of sin and examples of righteousness and assistants for the recovery of the sinners to harmony with God. This is true now as respects the sinners of the present time, who chiefly are those whose eyes have been once enlightened with some measure of the light of truth, and who are not walking worthy of the Lord. The members of the body of Christ are all to be living epistles, known and read of all men—their influence in the world is to be a reproof to sin in every state and condition. This Scripture will have a particular fulfilment in the next age, when the Church now under instruction “taught of God,” “made perfect through suffering,” “filled with the spirit,” shall by and by be glorified and become, as members of the body of Christ, the teachers of mankind—kings and priests unto God. In the present some sinners are reclaimed through good example; in the future we hope that many will be turned to the Lord under clearer light and more favorable conditions of the Millennial Kingdom.

“BORN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT”

Question.—In DAWN, Vol. I., p. 277, and again in the WATCH TOWER, January 1, 1905, considerable has been said respecting the new birth, discussed by our Lord with Nicodemus, but we do not find a particular comment upon our Lord's statement, “Except a man be born of water and the spirit he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God.” Will you kindly give us a word on this statement—what it imports?

Answer.—The Lord seems to have had in mind the natural birth as a figure or illustration of the new birth. Our thought is that water is here used, as frequently elsewhere, as a symbol of the truth, and that these words signify that unless one be first begotten “by the word of truth” he cannot be born of the spirit to the new nature. (Eph. 5:26.) We believe that the Word does teach a water immersion too, and that all of the Lord's people who discern this teaching would and should be glad to obey it, but we fail to see that the Lord has laid such a stress upon water immersion. One of the best evidences that he has not done so is the fact that so many Christian confessors of the past have given evidence of having been begotten of the holy Spirit and of having participated in the real baptism into Christ's death through a full consecration, and yet being ignorant of the Scripture teaching respecting water immersion they were never thus symbolically baptized. To apply the word “water” in this text to water immersion would, therefore, be to exclude from the Kingdom many of the Lord's loyal and faithful ones who have laid down their lives in his service. This fact corroborates our view, above stated, that the Lord did not mean to refer to water baptism, but to the truth which, in the quotation already referred to is mentioned as the begetting power—as primarily related, therefore, to our birth of the Spirit.

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THE DIVINE STANDPOINT

Question.—Please explain Rom. 4:17—“God ... calleth those things which be not as though they were.”

Answer.—The Apostle is discussing Abraham and God’s promises to him, one of which is, “I have made thee a father of many nations.” The Apostle calls attention to the fact that Abraham, in this matter, was a type of God, and that these words, therefore, imply that many nations would become children of God. The thought is somewhat beclouded by the translation, “before him whom he believed.” If this were rendered, “foreshadowing him whom he believed,” or “typifying him whom he believed,” the thought would be clearer to many.

The words concerning which you particularly enquire signify that God here, as frequently in other places, speaks of things not yet accomplished as though they were accomplished. Abraham was not a father of many nations at the time, and God did not even refer to his natural seed, through Ishmael and Isaac, and the sons of Keturah, but referred to the seed, the antitypical son of Abraham, which is Christ, the antitypical Isaac, and the Church, the antitypical Rebecca, through whom during the Millennial age all the families of the earth will be blessed, and be granted opportunity for regeneration, as children of God.

HOW ARE WE UNDER GOD’S PROTECTION?

Question.—How are we under divine care? How does the Lord’s protection come to us, his followers?

Answer.—It is as new creatures and not as old creatures, according to the flesh, that we are reckoned members of the body of Christ, and under control and supervision of our Head. It follows, then, that the interests of the new creature are those which will have the Lord’s special care and protection—even though this be at the expense of his earthly, temporal, physical interests. The flesh is consecrated to death anyway, and our desire and the Lord’s promise is that the faithful consummation of that earthly sacrifice shall work out the far more exceeding and abundant honor and blessing to the new creature. In a word, then, the Lord’s special care toward us is in respect to our spiritual interests, as members of the Royal Priesthood.

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— July 15, 1905 —



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